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Wisconsin Reforms Welfare: The Experiences of Recipients

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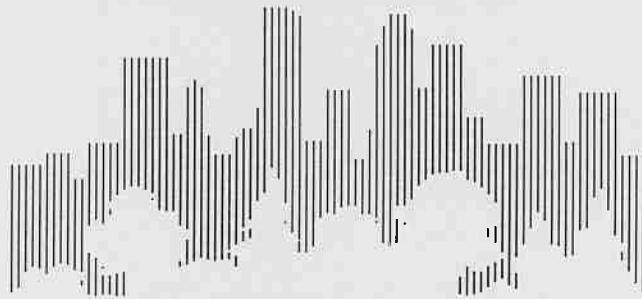
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MASTERS IN SOCIAL WORK THESIS

Kimberly Lewis

Wisconsin Reforms Welfare: The Experiences
of Recipients

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MSW
Thesis

Thesis
Lewis

"Wisconsin Reforms Welfare: The Experiences Of Recipients"

Kimberly Lewis

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirement for the degree of
Master of Social Work**

**AUGSBURG COLLEGE
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA**

1999

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK
AUGSBURG COLLEGE
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

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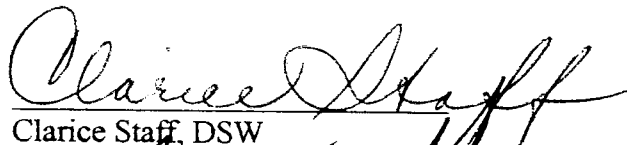
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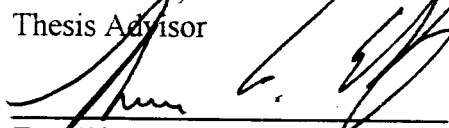
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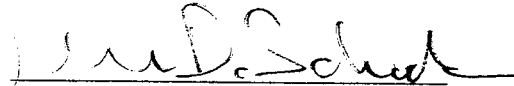
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ABSTRACT

“Wisconsin Reforms Welfare: The Experiences Of Recipients”

An Exploratory Study

Kimberly Lewis

May 17, 1999

This mixed qualitative and quantitative exploratory study was conducted in an effort to expand the knowledge base regarding Wisconsin welfare recipients under the new welfare reform policy titled “Wisconsin Works” or (“W-2”). A mixed research design was used in order to capture the experiences of “W-2” welfare recipients from their perspectives. A purposive sampling technique was utilized in conducting interviews of 6 participants who were receiving welfare in the state of Wisconsin. The interviews focused on several areas that are assumed to lead to self-sufficiency under the “W-2” policy, including food and shelter, child care, transportation and job skills/training. Content analysis was conducted in an effort to uncover common patterns and themes among the service users of the “W-2” policy. Qualitative answers were aggregated in order to compare and contrast the responses of the recipients. Quantitative numerical data was analyzed in an effort to explain and describe the experiences of recipients. Findings indicate recipients are still living in a life of poverty.

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DEDICATION

in honor of

Mr. & Mrs. Richard and Lynette Lewis

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents
in recognition of their eternal love and support
as I matured into an unique individual.

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their dedication in advancing the social work
profession through the teaching of students.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The research question for this exploratory study is as follows: “What are the experiences of current or former welfare recipients under “Wisconsin Works” (“W-2”) who are accessing additional services at Salvation Army (e.g. food and shelter, child care, transportation and job skills/training)?”

Welfare programs have a long and extensive history in the United States. The first federal welfare programs were created after the Revolutionary War (1775-1783). The programs were designed to provide pensions for war veterans. During the Civil War (1861-1865), pension benefits were extended to include the soldier’s widows and orphan children. In the early 1900’s welfare benefit distribution responsibility shifted from federal governments to the state governments. Some states expanded the programs to further include dependent children and the aged.

The Great Depression of the 1930’s shifted the responsibility of the program from the state level back to the federal level. The Social Security Act of 1935, which is now the foundation for welfare programs in the United States, established federal assistance programs for dependent children (ADC), those who are blind and the elderly. The Social Security Act of 1935 also created old-age and unemployment insurance. Out of the 1950’s and into the 1960’s came significant increases in welfare benefits. Congress passed laws in the 1960’s which provided incentives for mothers to find jobs. Existing programs received more funding and new programs were created such as the Food Stamp Program in 1964 and Medicaid in 1965. In addition, in 1962 ADC was re-named Aid to Families with Dependent Children or AFDC. The Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) programs were started in the mid-1970's. During the 1970's welfare benefits did not increase at the same rate as inflation. Legislation began to shift from work incentives to work requirements in the 1970's. In the 1980's Congress reduced benefits slightly. By the time of the 1980's, the demographics of those receiving benefits was no longer made up of just widows. A large number of those receiving aid were single mothers who were divorced, separated or had never married (Fetzer, 1994, p. 191).

Some have argued that the cash assistance program available to those living below the poverty line, known as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), has created a dependency in which service users do not have to earn their money. According to some, the AFDC program, once called Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) as Title IV-A of the Social Security Act of 1935, has allowed for the creation of biases against those who receive public assistance. Under AFDC, qualified applicants were guaranteed program benefits (DWD, 1998). AFDC was originally designed to allow women to stay at home and raise children in the absence of fathers. During the early decades of the program, it was culturally acceptable for women to receive public assistance due to the absence of the male wage earners (Mattaini & Opuente, 1997).

As years went by, people who were poor were thought of as being different from the rest of society primarily in their lack of money. AFDC became the solution to correct the income shortfalls in a simple standardized manner. AFDC became an entitlement based on economic need (Corbett, 1995). The people living in poverty were regarded as "worthy" of governmental financial assistance and were not expected to work. Anti-poverty programs such as AFDC often discouraged desirable behaviors like working, saving and taking initiative, all of which are needed in order to become financially independent of governmental cash assistance programs (Haveman, 1994).

This design of the public assistance program has allowed for the creation of stereotypes and biases against those who are receiving benefits. Biases have been sparked partially because recipients are thought to not be earning their living in comparison to the larger society who work. Today, recipients are categorized by others as people who are lazy, inefficient or drug addicts who do not care about their children (Swigonski, 1996).

Racial discrimination further oppresses those receiving assistance. Mink (1994) points out that research has found that additional biases are being placed on the people of the African American community who receive AFDC. The intersection of racial discrimination and classism further oppresses some specific groups. Based exclusively on race and not the capabilities of the welfare program, some vigorously oppose welfare programs which may benefit African Americans in some way. Mink adds that members of the Caucasian community are not stereotyped as recipients but rather categorized as “deviates from the cultural norm.”

According to Mills (1996), at times dependency on AFDC stigmatizes recipients into being thought of as “mentally unfit” individuals who lack self-worth. Mills continues by noting that Clayton (who trains case workers and job developers throughout the nation) claims that the use of AFDC leads to low self-esteem, fear, personal barriers and dependency of people who are poor (Mills, 1996). Mrs. Tate (fictional name) who is currently receiving welfare, can identify with Clayton’s comments, indicating, when ‘just anything’ is tossed at you, it lowers your self-esteem, and both males and females require a certain level of self-esteem for themselves” (Swigonski, 1996, p.96).

According to Mills (1996), those who support welfare reform claim that AFDC is failing because it is an entitlement program where the guaranteeing of benefits promotes

dependency. It is believed that able bodied people are relying on the state for their quality of living rather than relying on themselves. As a result, economic and fiscal constraints have forced some state governments and local municipalities to reduce or do away with AFDC programs (Halter, 1989). In contrast, authors such as White (1994) cite contrasting evidence listing Wisconsin's AFDC program as being very inexpensive, costing only one percent of the federal budget (\$16 billion) and 2.5 percent of Wisconsin's state budget.

According to Corbett (1995), current research into what is believed by some to be a failing AFDC system has been sparked by the large experiment in social policy that is currently taking place in Wisconsin. Wisconsin Governor Thompson initiated the first crucial steps in recent reforms in welfare in the state of Wisconsin by asking the state assembly to pass Wisconsin Act 99 which the Governor signed in 1993. Wisconsin Act 99 waived several provisions of federal law allowing Wisconsin to terminate its AFDC program by January 1, 1999. Wisconsin has done away with the federal program Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and has replaced it with the "Wisconsin Works" ("W-2") policy that promotes self-sufficiency and financial independence through work.

Cloward and Piven (1992) suggest that swift actions of waiving federal laws allowing states to begin welfare reform will lead to significant problem areas in the future. Their fear is that key components of the program will not be established at a pace equal to that of the policy. Cloward and Piven feel that these components will not be added at a later date. Punitive and coercive parts of the policy would be quickly established. However, necessary opportunities, supports and incentives such as education, child care and job training programs would not be established due to cost.

States reforming AFDC, such as Wisconsin, have benefited from the 1996 Congressional approval of the Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (TANF) block grant system. The block grants turn a fixed lump sum of federal money over to individual states to distribute. The goal of the TANF system is to allow states to create policies and to administer money in a way that addresses issues of poverty within each state. Under AFDC, money was distributed according to federal guidelines. Now, states can allocate the money as they wish as long as they are assisting families in need, abolishing recipient dependency, preventing and reducing out-of-wedlock births, and promoting two-parent families. If funds fall short at the close of a budget year, the states have the authority to turn families away. Block grants allow states like Wisconsin the freedom to direct money towards specific issues facing those living in poverty within the state.

Blank (1997) points out that federal block grants come with risks. If unemployment and poverty increase, the federal government will not automatically provide more funds to accommodate an increase in the number of those in need. The federal block grants are fixed and their real value will decrease as inflation increases over time or as the economy falters.

In summary, welfare programs date back as far as the Revolutionary War. Since the creation of these programs, changes have taken place shifting responsibilities from the federal level to the state levels and back again. The Social Security Act of 1935 opened the doors for the creation of an expanded number of assistance programs serving a broader range of people. Over the years changes have been made in an effort to encourage people receiving aid to find employment. Congressional laws in the 1960's provided incentives for people to work, and legislation in the 1970's made work a requirement. However, in the 1990's AFDC programs still had clients who could not or

were not supporting themselves through work (Fetzer, 1994). Wisconsin has taken steps to replace AFDC. Wisconsin has done away with the federal program Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and has replaced it with the "Wisconsin Works" ("W-2") policy that assumes to promote self-sufficiency and financial independence through work. "Wisconsin Works" may be structured in a way that creates recipients who work to support themselves and their families, something which the AFDC programs could not do (Corbett, 1995).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review consists of three areas: (1) Wisconsin's welfare reform policy and an outline of the goals and structure of the policy, (2) impacts of the "W-2" policy on people who are receiving aid which includes a listing of the early positive and negative results, and (3) gaps in research promoting a discussion into areas of the policy where research is needed and where ideas are not addressed.

Wisconsin's Welfare Reform

State level changes to the historical Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) policy are currently being made. In December 1993 Wisconsin Governor Thompson declared a war on what he perceived to be a sluggish welfare system. The Governor's plan was to replace AFDC with "Wisconsin Works" ("W-2") by January 1, 1999. In 1995, prior to the implementation of "Wisconsin Works," two reform programs titled "Work Not Welfare" and "Pay for Performance" were experimented with in three Wisconsin counties: Fond du Lac, Pierce and Calumet (DWD, 1996). By April 1996, Governor Thompson saw enough positive outcomes from the three pilot counties (e.g. a 44 percent reduction in the number of people receiving welfare) that he did not hesitate in asking for the "Wisconsin Works" or "W-2" bill to be enacted (Warner, 1996).

Under "Wisconsin Works" ("W-2"), people who are receiving aid will be time limited to a lifetime participation of a maximum of 5 years. Extensions to the time limit of actual participation will only be granted under special circumstances. Those with severe disabilities will be exempted from the 5 year cut-off period. The Department of

Workforce Development (DWD) will screen each individual in an effort to qualify them under the new policy. DWD is designed to aid recipients in their job search by creating a "one-stop" job center. Offering intensive case management services and support services for recipients, a Financial and Employment Planner (FEP) will help individuals achieve self-sufficiency (DWD, 1998).

In order to decrease dependency and take responsibility, recipients must secure employment through the following tiers set forth in "W-2"; (a) unsubsidized employment which means the recipient is capable of becoming employed immediately; (b) "trial" subsidized jobs in private or public organizations where recipients are taught "job ready" skills and; (c) "community service" jobs in which recipients are paid a grant equal to approximately 80 percent of the minimum wage for full time employment and are expected to spend at least 10 hours a week in educational and employment training activities. "W-2 Transitions" is designed to provide financial aid to those who are unable to perform any type of work due to a disability (Wiseman, 1996). "W-2" clients will be time limited to 24 months of actual participation in work components of "W-2" such as Trial Jobs, Community Service Jobs, or W-2 Transition. Extensions to the 24 month period may be granted by those implementing the policy but only after a thorough review of the individual case.

One key component of the "W-2" policy is that all those who are capable of working will work for their pay checks. Welfare checks will no longer be simply given out. A screening process has been included in the policy in which those who have severe disabilities will still receive benefits if proven that they can not, in any capacity, work at even the third tier level of the program (State of Wisconsin, 1994).

Under the new Wisconsin policy, those who qualify for assistance are not expected to immediately provide for their families entirely through money earned at a work site. Such items as food stamps, vouchers for child care, health care, and transportation, and the availability of using the federal tax law titled Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) of 1993 will be offered. It is expected that those receiving welfare will feel a sense of urgency to remove themselves from welfare rolls. As a motivating factor, the new policy will enforce a maximum time limit of 5 years lifetime participation. Those who are able to work and choose not to will have their welfare benefits sanctioned (State of Wisconsin, 1994).

Authors such as Walters takes issue with Governor Thompson and the experimental "Work-Not-Welfare" programs prior to the implementation of "W-2." Walters suggests Governor Thompson conveniently experimented with welfare reform in three pilot counties that were experiencing a strong economy. Thompson, according to Walters, avoided Milwaukee County which has a high rate of welfare cases. Walters continues by pointing out that the two pilot programs ("Work Not Welfare" and "Pay for Performance") tested in Wisconsin were in counties with only a small fraction of welfare caseloads. In addition, Walters (1997) suggests that the pilot programs were tested during the time of a healthy economy (Walters, 1997). Calumet County, one of Wisconsin's small rural communities of a little more than 36,000 people, was one of the test sites for "Pay for Performance," a pilot welfare reform program prior to "W-2." Research conducted in Calumet County following the implementation of "Pay for Performance" indicated a reduction in case loads and an increase in families' gross incomes, setting the stage for the introduction of "W-2" across the entire state of Wisconsin (Rathman, 1997).

According to Blank (1997), skeptics of the 5 year time limit believe that the cut-off point can not be enforced. In order to enforce such a time limit, a national tracking system would need to be established to identify the number of months during which support was received by recipients in all states. Blank points out that there have been no funds allocated to set up such a national tracking system.

According to Warner, it is important that the new "W-2" policy creates objectives and activities that are measurable through program evaluation research. Policy makers have outlined the following objectives for "W-2"; (a) provide recipients with benefits that acknowledge efforts toward work and self-sufficiency; (b) utilize support services that promote employment of recipients; (c) intensify actions toward collecting unpaid child support payments; (d) make it mandatory that teenage parents remain living with their parents and finish high school. Conducting an analysis will help determine if the new policy is successfully accomplishing what it is outlined to accomplish (DWD, 1996).

Through the use of research, it is important to measure the objectives of the policy in an effort to determine whether the policy is meeting these objectives. In the two counties where "Work Not Welfare" was experimented, the program proved to be very successful. The two pilot counties met program objectives by lowering the number of people on welfare by 44 percent between January 1995 and March 1996 (Warner, 1996).

Currently, no consensus has been reached as to whether the state is on the right track with the "W-2" welfare reform policy. The state has been slow to test the critical areas of the reform agenda in conventional scientific methods. Two politically motivated tests have been conducted in the area of cost and caseload reductions. In regards to the political agenda of cost and caseload reductions, "W-2" appears to have been very

successful. The issue of “W-2”s effectiveness has yet to be tested. The failure to rigorously test a new program comes with a heavy price because human subjects are involved. The price of not knowing the possible consequences of the new policy can be detrimental to those it serves (Corbett, 1995).

According to Corbett (1995), one desired outcome of the “W-2” policy is the reduction in the number of caseloads. Preliminary results have shown significant reductions in caseloads across Wisconsin. However, research on caseload reductions is not enough to indicate program success. Program goals include multiple factors most of which are focused on behavioral changes in recipients which are harder to define and measure. Behavioral changes might be defined as becoming self-sufficient by obtaining employment, and reducing out-of-wedlock births. Currently no significant research has been conducted focusing on behavioral changes (Corbett, 1995).

According to the group titled “Midwest Peer Assistance Network (WelPan) made up of senior welfare administrators from Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin, the debate on measuring the success of welfare reform focuses on two criteria: reducing the number of people on welfare, and getting welfare recipients into jobs. Representatives of WelPan concluded that the two criteria alone are not adequate indicators of successful welfare reform. Preliminary research indicates that it is too early to conclude that welfare caseload reductions, after the implementation of “W-2,” are proof of welfare reform success. WelPan has indicated ways of measuring welfare reform progress (indicators of changed behavior, program operations/functioning) by outlining a methodology and defining a common language; however, they have not conducted any research on the topic (WelPan, 1998).

Impacts Of “W-2”

Intertwined within the new policy is a value system which suggests that “when needs are adequately met, people experience a sense of well being or a general level of satisfaction with their lives” (Morales, 1992, p.25). “W-2” is designed to expose those living in poverty to new opportunities and to demand more of them through new obligations. The reform policy has a theoretical position that locates the problem in the individual (Corbett, 1995).

Critics such as Mattaini (et al, 1997) caution that the adoption of policies such as “W-2,” (which includes a punitive system) is unlikely to produce desired behavioral changes of economic self-sufficiency in those receiving aid. A punitive policy that makes life more difficult for people who are poor is likely to spark violence, aggression, depression and rioting by those receiving sanctions. In contrast, “W-2”’s mandatory work requirements may produce desired behaviors if recipients feel that there is a direct pay off from working. Research has shown that incentive-based strategies are more successful in producing desired behaviors and fewer negative outcomes than are punitive strategies.

In contrast, Cowger (1994) points out that some critics cite the policy as being deficit focused, viewing the person who is unemployed as the problem. Policies that concentrate on what is “wrong” with the person, why he/she is not working, actually reinforces the exact behavior it is trying to combat. The reinforced behavior becomes the powerlessness the recipient already feels because he/she is not working. In addition, such individually focused policies allow problematic economic and social structures to continue functioning in a manner that generates unequal power.

According to Blank (1997), welfare reform policy makers hold the general assumption that the average adult receiving public assistance can and should be working. If most recipients can work then states will be able to offer low economic subsidies to mandate employment, and to reduce caseloads and overall program expenses. Such assumptions have yet to be proven true. The “W-2” policy requires all recipients to obtain full time employment, exempting only mothers with a child under 12 weeks of age and those with severe disabilities. Recipients who fail to work a 40 hour week will have their grant monies reduced for each hour of work that is missed. Folk (1996) believes it will be unlikely that low-skilled mothers with young children will ever obtain incomes above the poverty line due to barriers such as work interruptions due to a child’s illness, and loss of child care.

Rector (1997) (a senior policy analyst at the Heritage Foundation) states that “the general thrust of welfare reform in the [Wisconsin] Thompson administration has been to require reasonable behavior by recipients as a condition of receiving aid” (Rector, 1997). Rector can find many supporters for his statement. For example, Anderson (1996) reports that Jason Turner, director of capacity building for the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, further elaborates emphasizing that “W-2” is designed in a way in which parents can be proud and have dignity in earning a family income through work.

Policy makers hold the belief that welfare recipients, who are parents, must seek employment in order for their children to be better off economically, socially and psychologically in the future. State administrators are aware that they will be held accountable if future research shows that children are failing as a direct result of the new welfare reform policy. Therefore, states such as Wisconsin, have added additional preventive measures such as child care vouchers to ensure that children are properly cared for while parents are at work (WelPan, 1998).

Chilman (1995) points out that little is known about what happens to older children whose parents work out of the home. The welfare reform policy "W-2" will require parents to work outside of the home, increasing the risks of delinquency, teen pregnancy and substance abuse by teens who lack after-school supervision (Chilman, 1995). Recently economists have become interested in the effects that increased parental work outside of the home is having on children. Blank (1997) reports that economists stress that research into the effects of parental work on children needs to be a high priority in evaluating the "W-2" policy. If policies such as "W-2" were to increase poverty, opponents estimate that over one million more children could fall below poverty. The impacts the policy has on children could be traumatic if it were to fail.

Anderson (1996) (director of California Department of Social Services) supports the notions held by Rector and Turner that behavioral changes will come out of welfare reform. Anderson cautions critics of welfare reform, such as the members of the Urban Institute and the National Urban League not to panic just yet. Members should embrace the positive behavioral changes that are to come.

According to Anderson (1996), Hugh Price (president of the National Urban League in 1996) opposes the new welfare reform policy stating, "Washington has decided to end the War on Poverty and begin a war on children" (Anderson, 1996, p.45). Child advocates and pediatricians such as Robert M. Kliegman and Willis Ernestine, share views similar to Price. Kliegman and Ernestine (1997) are specifically concerned with the new "W-2" program in Wisconsin where the halting of federal welfare spending may result in "human consequences" in states that are growing in population size. They point out that under the new "W-2" program in Wisconsin, 11,361 Milwaukee children lost AFDC benefits completely. Advocacy groups are lobbying hard in order to make sure families are not being victimized by the new welfare reform system simply because

they have children. Kliegman and Ernestine (1997) feel that as welfare reform continues to be implemented, it must be designed in a way that creates strong, productive individuals and families who can care for, protect and nurture children.

Additional concerns surface when the topic of health insurance for families is addressed. The new welfare reform program in Wisconsin will require co-payments for health insurance. Critics such as Kliegman (1997) fear that welfare recipients will fall short trying to budget health care and such key items as food and shelter. As a result, children will be more susceptible to diseases and will go without immunizations.

Kliegman (1997) reports that Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-New York), an expert on welfare reform, believes the concerns of critics are unwarranted. "Moynihan feels that states, like Wisconsin, that have done the best job in moving people off of welfare under the new reform program, have actually spent more on health care" (Kliegman, 1997, p. 26).

Anderson (1996) notes that Vance McMahan, policy director for the State of Texas, feels that struggling single parents who are on welfare as a result of unpaid child support, have a right to be upset. Addressing issues impacting the "war on poor children," is a big part of the puzzle. There are greater reasons other than financial ones as to why absent fathers should be identified. For example, fathers need to do something for their children. Anderson, director of California Department of Social Services, believes the aim of welfare reform is to make a better life for children. In order to create a better environment for children, fathers need to get back into their children's lives according to Anderson. She further adds that under the current circumstances, fathers are rarely seeing their children. Fathers and mothers cooperating will set a good example for their children. Children will get a better sense of what it takes to become a strong family

if their parents serve as positive role models. By not penalizing married couples, welfare reform programs such as Wisconsin's "W-2" may aid families in coming together as a whole unit. At issue is the fact that the male is being devalued not only in Wisconsin but across the nation due to unpaid child support and absent fathers. It appears that welfare reform policies such as the one implemented in Wisconsin, will not allow fathers to be "drop out dads." McMahan and Taylor from Texas, both share similar views as to why mothers, fathers and children are being disconnected. McMahan and Taylor feel that the old welfare system eroded the significance of marriage with regards to finances and in fact actually trapped families on AFDC while discouraging marriage (Anderson, 1996).

Wisconsin has been slow to test its new welfare reform policy in reference to the goals and objectives of the policy. The price of not knowing the possible consequences of the new policy can be detrimental (Corbett, 1995). Through the use of research, the policy objectives can be critically analyzed and any significant areas that may have been overlooked, can be discovered (Warner, 1996).

Gaps In The Literature

One topic that was not addressed in the literature is the discrimination in hiring those who are on welfare. The discrimination is a real barrier for those who are becoming visible within the workforce. According to Turner of Wisconsin, the old AFDC system isolated service users from the rest of society due to the shame that surrounded being on welfare (Anderson, 1996).

According to Folk (1996), racism is another real barrier for those receiving welfare. Research into racial discrimination is important in addressing barriers that may hinder people who are poor from achieving financial independence.

Folk (1996) emphasizes the great need for research after the “W-2” policy implementation. Currently the effects of the mandatory work policy on recipients with young children is unknown. In addition, little is known about program costs for women who are forced to work and have young children that require child care. Critics, such as Folk, fear that the new policy will prove to be more costly and less successful than previous welfare reform attempts.

Corbett (1995) supports Folks’ emphasis for research by stating, “To date, no consensus has emerged on whether the state is moving in the right direction, or even whether there is a direction that can be described in coherent terms” (Corbett, 1995, p.46). Corbett further suggests that the Thompson administration has succumbed to political pressures to understate the significance of rigorous research into its reform programs. Failure to conduct research comes with a heavy price. Failure to know the consequences of a newly implemented policy in itself has consequences because human lives are at stake.

According to Blank (1997), research into the well being of children, as their parents work more hours outside of the home, has not been conducted. Research into the effects that the policy is having on children must be a high priority.

Summary

Policy makers, striving to push forth the “W-2” welfare reform policy in Wisconsin, assert that AFDC is a costly, inefficient program that must be completely replaced (Halter, 1989). However, the literature provides evidence indicating that AFDC programs such as the one in Wisconsin, was actually inexpensive (White, 1994). Early evidence from the “Work Not Welfare” and “Pay For Performance” pilot counties in

Wisconsin have indicated that welfare reform does move recipients out of poverty and into self-sufficiency. The three pilot counties did meet program objectives of assisting recipients until they became self-sufficient. The experimental program lowered the number of people on welfare by 44 percent (Warner, 1996). Critics feel that the two pilot programs "Work Not Welfare" and "Pay for Performance" created self-sufficiency only because the programs were implemented in regions of the state that were experiencing strong economies (Walters, 1997).

At this time, the literature outlines both the pro's and con's of the implemented "W-2" welfare reform policy but does not provide information about the experiences of the service users. Research needs to be conducted in order to gauge whether the state-wide "W-2" policy is succeeding or failing in moving people off welfare and creating self-sufficiency. Gathering feedback about the experiences of recipients, ones for whom the policy is impacting on, is one way to measure whether "Wisconsin Works" ("W-2") is addressing the needs of those living in poverty.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The NASW *Code of Ethics* states that the goal of the profession of social work is “to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty” (NASW, 1996, p.1). The “W-2” policy seems to be based on the strengths perspective, as found in social work literature, in trying to assist those living in poverty. The strengths perspective draws workers and recipients away from focusing on recipient deficits. Horejsi (1994) indicates that this perspective may work well with most recipients at various phases in helping both the recipients and workers remain focused on the recipients’ strengths. Clients of the welfare system become conditioned to always seeing their deficits and referring to themselves as “needy.” People who are oppressed, such as welfare recipients, are not accustomed to thinking that they have strengths or even hidden talents. Awareness of talents and strengths have become suppressed due to misfortunes and a life of poverty. The strengths perspective addresses the individuals as being responsible for their poverty and not the structure in which they live.

Saleebey (1996) suggests that there is significance, however, in knowing how recipients have survived thus far and what resources they have drawn on during hardships. Focusing on recipient strengths re-directs the workers possible desire to “blame the victim.” The use of the strengths perspective with welfare recipients impels workers to understand that no matter how awful the situation may be, recipients have found ways to survive. Workers need to be aware of how recipients have survived, what they have learned and what significant sources they have drawn on in their effort to

overcome their problems. Workers using the strengths perspective will empower recipients by allowing recipients to define their own world, struggles and strengths. Allowing the recipients to be experts in their situation aids the workers and recipients in setting achievable goals based on the strengths that the recipients already possess. Goals that are manageable and which are recipient designed possess a greater likelihood of being achieved (DeJong & Miller, 1995).

Prior welfare reform strategies have not been founded on a concern for social and economic equality. Equality, respect for the dignity of recipients, and understanding the problems from the point of view of recipients are all consistent with the values and ethics found in the social work profession. Swigonski (1996) stresses that social workers will be more effective if they draw on the techniques of compassion and justice outlined in the strengths perspective while working with welfare recipients. Swigonski further suggests that social workers must aid recipients in drawing on their current strengths of persistence, creativity, hard work and skills that assist them in making something out of very little. Social workers must rediscover the commitment of pulling together in order to empower wounded recipients who are oppressed.

The strengths perspective directs workers and recipients into re-framing negative statements into positive ones. The perspective does not deny the fact that recipients face adversity, rather it draws on recipient strengths in overcoming these adversities (Saleebey, 1996). Discovering overlooked, untapped recipient strengths aids in motivating recipients towards positive change and financial self-sufficiency. The focus should be on the kind of life the recipient wishes to lead and what type of services and resources are available to help achieve the desired way of life (Horejsi, et al, 1994). According to Haynes (1998), Mary Richmond, a historical figure in the creation of the

social work profession during the early 1900s, believed that if workers gathered all available information on recipients, the solution to their problem would become evident.

The unique aspect of “W-2” is a change in how families applying for welfare are treated. Under “W-2,” financial and employment planners are now consulting with families, inquiring about specific individual needs, strengths and possible solutions (Rogers, 1997). The strengths perspective believes that the recipients are the only true experts on their situations. Therefore, the role of the “W-2” workers is to act as facilitators or consultants. Workers will provide recipients with information on available resources and services while drawing out the recipients’ unique strengths and talents to aid in creating self-sufficiency (Horejsi, et al, 1994).

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

The term welfare reform can have a variety of meanings to many different people. For the purpose of this thesis, welfare reform will be defined as a major change in the scope, generosity, design and administration of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (Corbett, 1995). Welfare reform suggests improvement. Reform implies that some form of betterment or progress will take place in how the public assistance program is delivered to meet the needs of the recipients. Improvement is defined as movement towards some goal. Currently the goals of the W-2 policy are to decrease dependency by recipients, decrease costs of operating public assistance programs, enforce responsibilities of recipients, and empowerment of recipients (Norris, 1995). Empowerment of recipients means to increase interpersonal skills and the performance of important social roles by recipients who belong to a stigmatized social category because they receive public assistance (Morales, 1992).

Research Question

The research design is in the form of a mixed qualitative and quantitative exploratory study. A mixed research design was chosen in order to understand the world welfare recipients experience from their own perspectives. Qualitative data analysis was utilized in an effort to derive universal ideas and themes from the data gathered. Quantitative data analysis aided numerically in describing and explaining the experiences of welfare recipients in regards to "Wisconsin Works" ("W-2"). The topic researched was the new welfare reform policy in the state of Wisconsin entitled "W-2" or "Wisconsin Works." The research question is: "What are the experiences of current and

former welfare recipients under “Wisconsin Works” (“W-2”) who are accessing additional services at Salvation Army (e.g. food and shelter, child care, transportation and job skills/training)?”

Sampling

Individuals volunteered to participate in the study as they sought out a variety of social services from the Salvation Army in a mid-sized city in Wisconsin. This exploratory research design made no attempt to randomly select individuals. A purposive sample technique was utilized. The sample is not one which can be generalized to the entire “Wisconsin Works” (“W-2”) population. However, the sample did provide insight into why “W-2” recipients were utilizing services at the Salvation Army.

Individuals were screened to ensure that he or she met two basic criteria. The researcher asked the individuals if (a) they were currently or had been receiving welfare benefits over the last two years under the “W-2” program and if (b) they were Wisconsin residents. Once it had been determined by the researcher that an individual had the outlined characteristics then consent was obtained to interview the individual. The outlined characteristics were essential in screening out those who received services at Salvation Army who were not Wisconsin residents and/or who had never received welfare under “Wisconsin Works.”

Instrument

The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with six participants using a pre-tested interview schedule. Permission to interview, audio tape and quote recipients was granted before any interviews began. The interviewer read the consent form to all

recipients and asked that each potential participant give written permission to be interviewed. Recipients who desired not to be interviewed were replaced by another pre-screened individual at no risk to themselves. Data gathering was completed after six individuals were interviewed.

In order to lessen possible measurement errors, a pre-test of the interview instrument was conducted with three recipients. In the pre-test, question clarity was examined to ensure that the questions being asked were relatively easy to understand regardless of the recipient's educational or cultural background. The pre-test results screened for biased wording of questions. The pre-test was conducted in an effort to decrease the amount of random error and increase the level of confidence in the survey instrument. The goal in conducting the test was to generate comparable responses in the six participants. The instrument was evaluated by colleagues and experts who currently work with welfare recipients. The questions themselves were analyzed making sure to avoid such errors as the use of double-barreled questions or leading questions. In addition, the pre-test results were critiqued by the researcher and the thesis advisor to make sure that the questions were measuring what they were designed to measure. Furthermore, it was determined that the questionnaire had face validity when it was thought to be measuring key variables of the experiences of those who were or had been receiving welfare under "W-2."

In order to increase the credibility of the questionnaire, the researcher was careful to ask only questions that the recipients were likely to know something about. Pre-screening for specific characteristics, increased reliability. The questionnaire was believed to be relevant to the recipients and the questions were clear. Pre-testing the questionnaire aided in improving the instruments' reliability and face validity. The instrument was not subject to rigorous mathematical testing; therefore its reliability and

validity may have been low but not entirely without value. There was only one designated researcher who presented the questions to the recipients in face-to-face interviews.

Data Analysis

Open-ended questions allowed for content analysis, and an exploratory examination of the dynamics of the newly implemented welfare reform policy in Wisconsin. The instrument utilized both qualitative and quantitative questions. The instrument allowed participants to add information they felt was relevant that may not have been covered through quantitative questions. In analyzing the data, common themes and patterns were extracted from the information obtained from the recipients. The reasoning behind data analysis for the research project was to look for similarities and dissimilarities that may have been present in the data. Quantitative data was analyzed in an effort to describe and explain the experiences of welfare recipients. The pivotal point for the research project focused on the proposed research question: "What are the experiences of current or former welfare recipients under Wisconsin Works ("W-2") who are accessing additional services at Salvation Army (e.g. food and shelter, child care, transportation and job skills/training)?"

Protection Of Human Subjects

The research project was reviewed by the Institutional Review Board at Augsburg College in order to further protect the recipients and to ensure that the research was ethically designed. Feedback into the ethics of the proposed research project was also sought from social work colleagues, advisors and experts in the field. Keeping in mind that the participation in research may interfere with the lives of recipients, the researcher

informed recipients that they could choose not to participate in the interview at any time with no risks to themselves or the benefits they received through the Salvation Army or any connection with Augsburg College.

Confidentiality was assured to participants; however the participants were not completely anonymous to the researcher. In order to not deceive the participating recipients, an explanation of how the information would be used and for what purposes was verbally presented to recipients. The recipients were made aware of counseling services at Salvation Army that they could contact if participation in the study produced any negative psychological repercussions for them. Tape recordings of the interviews and raw data were available to the researcher only. The audio tapes and raw data were held by the researcher as a reference and will be destroyed after October, 1999.

Strengths Of The Study

The use of one consistent researcher presenting the questions to recipients added strength to the research project by lessening possible measurement errors. In addition, the “do no harm” social work value was upheld by clearing the research project with the Augsburg Institutional Review Board, and acquiring feedback of the project from the thesis advisor, colleagues and experts working with welfare recipients.

The qualitative nature of the study added additional strength. Participants were asked to respond to questions by drawing on their own experiences. They provided information on a topic in which they were very familiar with.

A strength in the study was the pre-tested interview instrument. The final questions presented to the recipients were pre-screened for clarity in understanding. The

questionnaire was pre-tested to ensure that the instrument being used was accurately measuring what it was intended to measure. The researcher protect against possible measurement errors, however, the questionnaire had not been proven reliable through rigorous research.

Limitations Of The Study

Social desirability bias is a possible limitation because the recipients knew that they had been selected because they were or had been receiving welfare benefits under “W-2” and had sought out services at the Salvation Army.

Second, the recipients may have feared workers at the Salvation Army would see the completed results, therefore the recipients may have limited their responses. Third, a danger in doing in-person interviews was the fact that recipients may have provided a response to a question simply in an effort to please the researcher. Recipients were informed that the researcher was not affiliated with the agency in any way.

Fourth, the small sample size created an unstable data base in which correlation's between participants could not be easily drawn. Finally, a limitation of not being completely anonymous may have discourage recipients from participation because their identity would be confidential, however, they would not have been entirely anonymous.

Chapter V

FINDINGS

Data was collected from six participants over a five day period (30 hours) at the Salvation Army in a mid-sized city in Wisconsin during the mid-morning, peak lunch hour and afternoons. Keeping in mind the exploratory nature of the project, research results were intended to provide insight and clues into areas in need of future research. The research question was “What are the experiences of current or former welfare recipients under “Wisconsin Works” (“W-2”) who are accessing additional services at Salvation Army (e.g. food and shelter, child care, transportation and job skills/training)?” The data collected provided penetration into an increased understanding of the research question.

Using the research question as criteria, data was grouped into the following three areas (a) explanation of why people are accessing services at the Salvation Army, (b) evaluation of “Wisconsin Works” through the experiences of recipients, (c) recipient opinions as to whether or there are gaps in the services provided through the new policy.

Demographics Of “W-2” Recipients Accessing Additional Services

According to research results, five of six participants reported that they once received assistance under Aid To Families With Dependent Children (AFDC). Based on the findings, it is possible to conclude that the respondents had a history of receiving aid. Data gathered does, however, indicate that most recipients are no longer receiving benefits from such programs as “Wisconsin Works.” At the time of the interviews, only two out of six participants were receiving aid from “Wisconsin Works” (see Table 1).

Table 1: Tracking Service Users

#	received AFDC	currently receiving aid from "W-2"
A-1	yes	no
A-2	yes	yes
A-3	yes	no
A-4	yes	no
A-5	no	yes
A-6	yes	no

There are various reasons as to why recipients are no longer receiving aid. For example, some have become exempt from the program because they are receiving SSI benefits and others no longer qualify because they choose not to participate in the required work components of the "Wisconsin Works" program. Three of those surveyed had been referred to a job service agency by a "W-2" worker.

Why Accessing Services

According to data from this exploratory study, all participants surveyed were seeking services because they were low income, were unemployed at the time of the interviews with the exception of one, and were in need of food assistance and other services at the Salvation Army (see Table 2).

Table 2: Services Being Accessed At Salvation Army

#	gender	marital status	# in household		employed	services
A-1	female	single	1	1	no	hot meals, referral, transportation vouchers
A-2	female	single	1	2	no	food assistance, child care
A-3	female	single	2	2	no	food assistance, clothing, housing, referral, warming shelter
A-4	female	single	1	3	yes	food assistance, furniture
A-5	female	single	1	1	no	food assistance, referral
A-6	female	single	1	3	no	food assistance
Total			7	12		6=food assistance

Specifically, A-1, who is a single female with one child, was using the following services at the Salvation Army, hot meals, referral and transportation vouchers. A-1 and her son came to Salvation Army for lunch. According to the mother, she was seeking out the free lunch program in order to, "stretch out the meals to save what food she had at the house." A-1 continued by saying that she is, "stressed in trying to find a place for her and her son to live." In addition, A-1 is frustrated stating, "I am sick of the government screwing with people so they barely have enough money but not enough to live off of."

A-2, who is a single female with two children, was recently laid off work. She was seeking the following services at Salvation Army: food assistance and child care items such as diapers. A-2 reported that she has been receiving assistance from "W-2" over the past two years. She is appreciative of the programs help in providing food for her children. Though A-2 was not employed at the time of the interviews, she recalls a time a year ago that she worked with a job placement person in resume writing and practicing mock job interviews.

A-3, who had recently been released from jail and had a baby, lives in a household of two adults and her two children. She was seeking the following services at Salvation Army: food assistance, clothing, housing, hot meals, referral and the warming shelter. A-3 states, "I am trying to get back on my feet." She was in need of money to buy "baby things."

A-4, a single female with three children, just moved into the area from a surrounding county. Due to the expenses of the move, she was left with little money for groceries and was seeking the following services at Salvation Army: food assistance and furniture. A-4 was employed at the time of the interviews and felt that she had the required skills/training to perform her job. She shared that she owns her own car. In addition she shared that the "W-2" program has been helpful in putting her in touch with helpful resources.

A-5, a single female with one child, knew that she could rely on Salvation Army for help when she needed it. She knew that "the doors would always be open" and she sought out the following services, food assistance and referral. A-5 was not employed at the time of the interview. She cited child care difficulties, lack of skills/training and difficulties with transportation as the reasons for being unemployed. In addition, A-5 has a unique perspective of the "W-2" program in regards to being a teenage mother who is receiving assistance. She states, "the program is not considerate of young parents because it stereotypes them."

A-6 is a single female with three children who lost her job six months ago due to reasons of illness. A-6 turned to the Salvation Army for food assistance. A-6 was not employed at the time of the interview but shared the "W-2" program was helpful in helping her find a job and provide information about job applications and resumes.

Valuable insight in regards to why participants are seeking services at the Salvation Army can be generated from the reports given by the service users. One may conclude from the data that the "Wisconsin Works" policy is not completely meeting the needs of those using the services. Research results found that 5 out of 6 of the participants were not employed, therefore, indicating that they had not achieved self-sufficiency according to the standard set forth in "W-2". In reference to the effectiveness of the "Wisconsin Works" program, all six women were in need of services offered by such private agencies as the Salvation Army, clothes closets and financial services agencies. All six women had unique explanations as to why they needed the services at Salvation Army. There were, however, common patterns found among the women. All six participants were single females, all but one of the participants were unemployed, and all were mothers seeking food assistance services. In addition, nearly all were entitled to receive non-custodial parental child support payments, and only one was found to be actually receiving these payments from the child's father. Those familiar with the demographics of those on welfare would expect to find single mothers, who are entitled to receive non-custodial parental child support payments and yet who are not receiving child support payments.

Evaluation Of The Policy By Recipients

As the six participants evaluated "Wisconsin Works" through their own experiences (see Table 3), it was found that two participants indicated that the policy was helpful, three participants felt the program was both helpful and not helpful, and one participant felt the program was not helpful. Participants gave various reasons for how the program was helpful and not helpful for them.

Table 3: Overall Performance Of “W-2” According To Participants

#	helpful	not helpful	both
A-1	X	X	X
A-2	X		
A-3	X	X	X
A-4	X		
A-5		X	
A-6	X	X	X
Total	5	4	3

A-1 shared that the program was helpful for her because it provided assistance with child care expenses. A-1 appreciated having a “W-2” worker to help her. The program was not helpful to her when her benefits were eliminated once she began receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

In the opinion of A-2, “if it wasn’t for the “W-2” program she believes she wouldn’t have a roof over her head.”. She found the job training and services provided by the “W-2” worker as being helpful.

A-3 found it significant when the “W-2” program provided financial assistance for her to buy supplies for her baby. A-4 found the program to be helpful reporting that the program provided her and her children with medical assistance, food stamps and access to helpful resources.

A-5 did not find the program to be helpful to her or her child. She feels that the policy makers don't understand that "moms need time at home with their children rather than to be working so much." According to A-5, the program does not allow mothers to stay at home and raise their children. However, A-5 does agree that mothers should not receive additional benefits for additional births. A-5 shared that she feels the policy stereotypes young teenage mothers. A-5's experience as a young adolescent parent was one of being categorized as immature and irresponsible.

A-6 found the program to be both helpful and not helpful. She feels the program was helpful in getting her a job and teaching her how to create resumes and fill out job applications. A-6 reported that the program was not helpful once she found a job. Making \$6.50 an hour at her place of employment, A-6 was dropped from the "Wisconsin Works" program and her medical assistance was discontinued. A-6 was frustrated because one month she made too much money to qualify for "W-2" and the next month she would qualify. A-6 felt the up and down pattern left her in continuous poverty.

Reports from participants indicate that the "W-2" program has been a helpful resource in their lives providing job service/training and child care aid. In each of the six cases, children were involved. Five out of six mothers indicated the "W-2" policy has in some way or another been beneficial to their children. The respondents reported that the "W-2" program has provided aid for child care expenses and financial assistance for key baby items. Based exclusively on the experiences of these six respondents, the "W-2" policy is proving to be sensitive to making sure that the needs of children are being met.

Gaps In Services According To Recipients

Two participants felt there were no gaps in services under the “Wisconsin Works” (“W-2”) policy and four participants reported specific gaps in the “W-2” program (see Table 4).

Table 4: Gaps In The Service Delivery Of “W-2”

#	gaps?	specific gaps cited
A-1	yes	exempted because receiving SSI benefits
A-2	no	
A-3	no	
A-4	yes	narrow financial qualification margins
A-5	yes	lack of affordable transportation
A-6	yes	narrow financial qualification margins

A-1’s experience with the policy has been frustrating due to specific gaps. A-1 has become exempt from the program because she is receiving SSI. Her frustration occurs when she realizes that she doesn’t have enough money for her and her child to live. She makes \$5 too much to receive assistance under “Wisconsin Works” or to qualify for medical and housing assistance. A-1 uses the services provided by the Salvation Army in order to stretch her food and financial budget. A-2 and A-3 did not feel there were gaps in the welfare reform program.

A-4 and A-6 cite similar gaps in services. Both indicate that the “W-2” program has very narrow financial margins as to whether one qualifies or not. A-4 reported that if someone is on the borderline by just a few dollars too much in income then he/she would not qualify for assistance. A-6 lists the program as being an “all or nothing type deal.” She suggests that the program be designed in a way in which recipients can gradually shift from public assistance to complete self-sufficiency through work. A-6 has had to turn to her mother and her children’s schools for financial contributions when she is unable to meet the family’s needs.

A-5 felt the lack of provided transportation is a gap in the program. She suggests that the program needs to do more to provide affordable transportation and help in obtaining a drivers license to those who qualify.

In conclusion, the “Wisconsin Works” program does have gaps according to the participants surveyed. It appears that service users are struggling in areas that are not being addressed through the “W-2” program. Specifically, respondents were concerned with being excluded from the program because they are receiving SSI, the lack of affordable transportation and help in obtaining a drivers license and, the narrow margin between those who qualify for assistance and those who do not.

A major discovery as a result of this project found that five participants did not use the job service agency and all five were not employed at the time of the interviews. The one respondent that was working at the time of the interview reported that she was not referred to a job service agency by a “W-2” worker. She had obtained employment with out the help of the “W-2” program. All participants interviewed were still in need of assistance. Participants where seeking services from privately funded programs such as the Salvation Army. According to the outlined objectives of the “W-2” policy, a major

component in inspiring self-sufficiency is for service users to secure employment. Results of this study provide significant clues into the “W-2” policies failure to meet its own objectives.

The research project raised specific concerns in regards to affordable housing. Four out of the six participants estimated that 50% or more of their annual incomes goes towards payments of rent or mortgage. Focusing exclusively on the region of Wisconsin in which this project was conducted, the question surfaces as to whether or not there is enough affordable, low income housing available? One component for further research would be addressing the barriers to finding affordable housing for those trying to rise above the poverty line.

Further more, concerns have surfaced in regards to medical coverage for children. Unfortunately, five of the participants surveyed did not use free medical assistance programs. Questions are raised when one examines the research results documenting that all of the participants have children, five out of six of those surveyed were not employed and four out of six did not spend any of their annual incomes on medical expenses. Two alternatives may be found (a) the children are receiving no medical services, or (b) the non-custodial parent is providing medical coverage. The later alternative seems unlikely since survey results indicated that five out of the six participants were entitled to non-custodial child support payments and four of the five were not receiving these payments. Children living in poverty may be facing the first alternative of receiving no medical services at all. If children are not receiving medical services, then one may draw conclusion that the future generations are at high risk for health and psychological difficulties.

There appears to be a shift taking place in regards to where those in poverty are seeking services. Participants surveyed were no longer receiving benefits from public sector programs such as "W-2". Rather, those in need were seeking out services from private organizations such as Salvation Army. If these six participants represent the face of poverty in Wisconsin, then one might conclude that those living in poverty are not becoming self-sufficient and rising above the poverty line. The poor population continues to seek out services from private organizations.

In conclusion, areas for future research have been discovered as a result of this research project. Participants surveyed have not experienced a smooth transition from AFDC to "W-2". Fewer people are found to be receiving assistance from the "W-2" programs. However, people are still in need of services from private organizations rather than the public assistance programs. Results from this study provide clues about barriers of affordable housing and the accessibility of medical services for children. The study raises the important issue of unpaid parental child support payments and its relationship to children living in poverty.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this research project was to gain information about the “Wisconsin Works” (“W-2”) welfare reform policy from the experiences of those for whom the policy was designed. Specifically the study addressed the levels of service user satisfaction, the opinions of recipients about what is working and what is not, and whether or not the policy is actually meeting the outlined goals and objectives.

Limitation Of The Study

A limitation of the study is the small sample size. Due to this low number of respondents, the results were hard to compare and contrast in an effort to find possible themes and patterns. Another limitation is the use of a non-randomized sample population taken from the Salvation Army agency. Results, therefore, were not generalized to the entire “Wisconsin Works” recipients throughout the state of Wisconsin. Conclusions could only be drawn in relation to those seeking services at the Salvation Army agency.

A limitation surfaced in regards to the survey instrument used. The instrument did not include a question about the age of the respondents or where their source of income was obtained if they were not employed. The additional information may have proven to be useful in generating a deeper understanding of participants. Also, the study was concluded after a short period of time. The impact of the policy on families will not be fully understood for several years and will require further study.

Conclusions

This exploratory study showed that respondents found areas of the “Wisconsin Works” program to be both helpful and not helpful. Participants cite particular aspects of the program that were helpful such as job service and training, child care and the accessibility of someone to work with such as a “W-2” worker. In regards to job service/training, child care expenses and case management, it appears from this exploratory study that the policy is meeting these desired goals and objectives.

One of the most important goals of the policy is to promote self-sufficiency through work. The results from this study found that the policy is not helping respondents to become self-sufficient through work since only one of the responders was employed. However, the data may also be an indication of various stages of attachment to the workforce. At this time it could be determined that participants were not self-sufficient because they had to seek out supplemental resources through Salvation Army. Research results indicated that half of the participants (3) were referred to job service agencies by a “W-2” worker, an integral component to the policy. At this time, all but one respondent failed to use the job service agencies.

Evidence from this study indicates that parental child support payments are not being received by the participants. Based on the population accessing services at Salvation Army, the “W-2” policy and the state of Wisconsin are failing to collect child support payments from non-custodial parents.

In conclusion, there appears to be indications demonstrating that the “W-2” workers are enforcing key components of the policy (providing resources about job service agencies, resume writing, job application familiarity and meeting child care

needs). Service users are somewhat satisfied with the help they have received. In contrast, there is evidence showing that the policy is not doing what it is designed to do (collect child support payments, promote self-sufficiency) and services are ineffective in generating positive outcomes. Further research is needed in order to generate a more accurate picture on the experiences of the “W-2” recipients and whether the program is actually moving people from welfare to work.

Recommendations

Several recommendations have surfaced as a result of this study. First, it is recommended that future studies on the “Wisconsin Works” policy to access participants from the local Department Of Health And Human Services (DHHS) or a financial assistance program which is designed to help those living in poverty. Contacting DHHS or a financial assistance agency would allow access to a larger number of qualifying participants.

Second, a larger number of participants should be gathered and surveyed. A study of this magnitude should be conducted over a minimum of one year in order to generate valuable data.

Third, in conducting this study it became apparent that those receiving SSI did not qualify for assistance under “Wisconsin Works”; however they were still in need of supplements through Salvation Army. The gap between SSI and poverty may indicate an area for further research.

Fourth, it is recommended that policy makers take into consideration the needs and requests of those the “Wisconsin Works” policy is impacting. The following needs

and requests have surfaced as a result of this study (a) provide affordable transportation and training to get a drivers license; (b) increase the financial cut off margin for qualifying recipients for assistance; (c) allow mothers to stay at home and raise their children, and (d) design the program so it allows recipients to gradually leave public assistance and become self-sufficient through work.

In addition, it is recommended that studies similar to this one continue to be conducted on the "Wisconsin Works" ("W-2") program. Studies which utilize similar methodologies would provide additional data on the performance of the welfare reform policy. These studies would provide policy makers with information in regards to employment history, recidivism rates and the rates of recipients to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency over long periods of time.

Implications For Social Work

The information and analysis provided in this exploratory research project can help social works and policy makers ensure an effective program for those living below poverty. The "W-2" or "Wisconsin Works" welfare reform policy is in its infancy stage and very little scientific research on the effects of "W-2" on recipients has been conducted. Research is extremely important in determining the success and failures of the new policy. Social workers will want to know any implications the policy may be having on recipients. In addition, rigorous research may indicate areas of strengths in the Wisconsin welfare reform policy that may then be modeled through out other states. New programs may need to be developed in areas where "W-2" falls short. Social workers will be relying on additional research results to determine whether or not the policy is successfully meeting the needs of those living in poverty.

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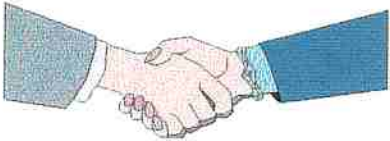
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Appendix A

Recruitment Flyer

IRB Approval Number 99-26-3



Your Opinion Matters

You are invited to participate in a research project about the welfare reform policy "Wisconsin Works" or "W-2"

Please come today to the **gymnasium** (from inside Salvation Army's main office, go out the door and turn right, follow the hallway straight to the gym) located within the Salvation Army, to meet researcher Kim Lewis and gather more information on this project

COOKIES AND JUICE AVAILABLE

TODAY FROM 9AM TO 12:30PM



Appendix B

IRB Approval Number 99-26-3

SURVEY NO. _____

DATE _____

#1 Are you a Wisconsin resident?

☐ yes ☐ no

#2 Have you received welfare benefits at any time under "Wisconsin Works" ("W-2")?

☐ yes ☐ no

(If no to either of the first two questions, participant does not qualify for study)

#3 Are you currently receiving benefits under "W-2"?

☐ yes ☐ no

#4 How long have you received public assistance under Wisconsin Works ("W-2")?

#5 Have you ever received public assistance from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) prior to Wisconsin Works ("W-2")?

☐ yes ☐ no#6 ☐ male ☐ female (researcher will note based on observation)

#7 How many adults are in your family?

#8 How many children under age 18 are living in your household?

(If none, cross out #20, #21, #22 and #24)

#9 What services are you seeking at the Salvation Army?

☐ food assistance☐ transportation vouchers☐ clothing☐ financial assistance for utilities☐ housing (Project Home)☐ warming shelter☐ hot meals☐ outreach center☐ referral☐ other _____

#10 Briefly explain why you are seeking services at Salvation Army?

#11 Within the past two years have you sought out services at any of the following:

- ☐ clothe closet ☐ food pantries
☐ emergency shelter ☐ church programs
☐ free medical clinic ☐ other _____

#12 Have you ever been referred to a job service agency by a "W-2" worker?

- ☐ yes ☐ no

#13 Have you ever used job services provided by "W-2" within the past 2 years?

- ☐ yes ☐ no

If yes, please explain

#14 Are you currently employed?

- ☐ yes ☐ no

If no, why are you not employed?

- ☐ health reasons ☐ lack of skills/education
☐ child care difficulties ☐ difficulties with transportation to work
☐ other _____

(If no, go to #23)

#15 Do you have more than one place of employment?

- ☐ yes ☐ no

If yes, how many _____

#16 How many hours per week do you work at each job?

- ☐ 0-10 ☐ 31-40
☐ 11-20 ☐ 41-50
☐ 21-30 ☐ over 51

Second Job:

- ☐ 0-10 ☐ 31-40
☐ 11-20 ☐ 41-50
☐ 21-30 ☐ over 51

Third Job:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 0-10 | <input type="radio"/> 31-40 |
| <input type="radio"/> 11-20 | <input type="radio"/> 41-50 |
| <input type="radio"/> 21-30 | <input type="radio"/> over 51 |

#17 Do you feel you have the required skills/training to perform your job?

- ☐ yes ☐ no

If no, please explain

#18 What is your main source of transportation to work?

- ☐ own car
☐ public transportation
☐ friend/ family
☐ other _____

#19 Have you experienced any difficulties with these travel arrangements?

- ☐ yes ☐ no

If yes, please explain

#20 Do you use child care services for your children while at work?

- ☐ yes ☐ no

If no, skip to #23

If yes, what type of child care services?

- ☐ workplace
☐ relatives
☐ private arrangements
☐ licensed daycare provider
☐ other _____

#21 Has Wisconsin Works ("W-2") helped you locate a child care provider?
☐ yes ☐ no

#22 How are child care expenses paid for?
☐ W-2 vouchers
☐ wages
☐ other _____

#23 About what percentage of your annual household income goes to the following:

food	_____	rent/mortgage	_____
transportation	_____	child care	_____
medical	_____	utilities	_____

#24 Are your children entitled to receive parental child support payments?
☐ yes ☐ no

If yes, do you receive these parental child support payments as scheduled?

☐ yes ☐ no

#25 Has the Wisconsin Works ("W-2") program been helpful, not helpful or both, to you and/or your family?
☐ helpful ☐ not helpful ☐ both

Please explain;

#26 In your opinion, are there any gaps in services in the "W-2" program?

